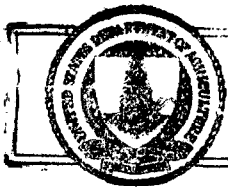


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THIRTY-FOUR MUSK-OXEN BROUGHT  
FROM GREENLAND - TO GO TO ALASKA  
- - - - -

A herd of 34 young musk-oxen, arrived at New York on the Norwegian-America Line ship, the Bergensfjord, September 15, and were taken immediately to the Government animal quarantine station to be held there two weeks before being shipped to Alaska. They came from Greenland, by way of Norway, and their destination is Fairbanks, in the interior of Alaska, where the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture will keep them in a large inclosure for study and breeding. The purpose is eventually to reestablish musk-oxen in the ranges of northern Alaska, where they roamed in considerable numbers until exterminated a century ago.

E.A. Preble, of the Biological Survey, and L. J. Palmer of the same bureau, in charge of the reindeer experiment station near Fairbanks, met the shipment of young musk-oxen and saw that they were safely transferred from the ship. They will go by express to Seattle, thence by boat to Seward, Alaska, completing the journey in the territory by rail, under the care of Mr. Palmer.

At Fairbanks the bureau has prepared a large inclosure which will provide conditions that simulate the natural wild range of musk-oxen, and will afford opportunity for studying the possibilities of domestication and breeding of the animals with a view to making greater economic use of the areas north of timberline. In feed requirements the musk-oxen differ considerably from the reindeer, and will not compete with the herds of these animals, which the United States

Government, through the Bureau of Education, introduced into Alaska nearly forty years ago.

"Musk-oxen," Paul G. Redington, Chief of the Biological Survey, explains, "are the most truly Arctic of all the large mammals of North America. At the time of the earliest exploration of the Arctic, these animals inhabited the vast territory north of the great transcontinental forest. Natives of Alaska say that their grandfathers killed musk-oxen in the region south of Point Barrow. but there is no record that Europeans have seen the animals in Alaska.

"Long ago the musk-oxen disappeared from the north of Europe and Asia. They still live in northern Canada and in Greenland. Canada, for several years, has been making vigorous efforts to preserve these interesting animals and has established several reservations where hunting is prohibited.

"Musk-oxen resemble somewhat a small-sized buffalo, or bison. They have a distinct hump, though it is not so conspicuous as the buffalo's. Their color is dark brownish to black with lighter brown or cream color on the back. They grow an undercoat of thick wool, and through this wool grow long black guard hairs that may sweep almost to the ground, giving the animal a stocky appearance. Mature animals weigh approximately 500 pounds, sometimes more.

"A distinctive feature of the musk-oxen is the heavily horned head. Mature bulls have horns whose massive bases are close together at the forehead, and after descending turn sharply upward and end in sharp points. The horns of the female are similar but somewhat more slender. These make excellent weapons against wolves, which are the only formidable natural enemies of the musk-oxen. When attacked, the adult animals form a circle with horns outward and with the calves protected within the circle. Effective as this is against

wolves, it is suicidal against men armed with rifles. Hunters were probably able to kill most of a herd, which often represented all the musk-oxen within many miles. Musk-oxen rarely travel far from their local range.

"In summer the animals feed on grass and succulent herbage. In winter they feed on dried grasses and browse on dwarf willows. They like to feed on open wind-swept ridges and other high places where the wind blows away the snow, but they are able to paw away snow and reach deeply buried food. Surprisingly, they seem to keep fatter and in better condition in winter than in summer. Their heavy coats protect them against the cold of winter and against insect attacks in summer.

"Relatively few musk-oxen have been imported into the United States. The first was delivered to the New York Zoological Park in 1902. New York, Washington, and Philadelphia zoos have musk-oxen, and the usual experience has been that the animals are gentle and tractable. This indicates that the animals will be relatively easy to domesticate. Few have bred under the unnatural conditions imposed on them. Two calves were born in New York in 1925 but did not live long.

"At Fairbanks," said Mr. Redington, "the small herd will have adequate range and will be in care of men experienced in feeding animals under Arctic conditions. If we can establish herds in Alaska they will subsist largely on range forage that reindeer do not use. Their flesh is excellent food. They can live under rigorous conditions of weather, and the fact that they do not wander far from their established range will make it easy to herd them."

The new herd of musk-oxen has been acquired at the direction of Congress, which last session added \$40,000 to the appropriation of the Biological Survey for the specific purpose, in response to a memorial from the Alaskan legislature.